UNITED NATIONS **E**

Economic and Social Council

Distr.
GENERAL

E/CN.4/Sub.2/2002/SR.9
23 September 2002

ENGLISH
Original: FRENCH

COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS

SUB-COMMISSION ON THE PROMOTION AND PROTECTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS

Fifty-fourth session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 9th MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Tuesday, 6 August 2002, at 10 a.m.

Chairperson: Mr. PINHEIRO

later: Ms. ZERROUGUI
(Vice-Chairperson)

later: Mr. PINHEIRO
(Chairperson)

CONTENTS

ADMINISTRATION OF JUSTICE, RULE OF LAW AND DEMOCRACY (continued)

ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL RIGHTS

This record is subject to correction.

Corrections should be submitted in one of the working languages. They should be set forth in a memorandum and also incorporated in a copy of the record. They should be sent within one week of the date of this document to the Official Records Editing Section, room E.4108, Palais des Nations, Geneva.

Any corrections to the records of the public meetings of the Sub-Commission at this session will be consolidated in a single corrigendum, to be issued shortly after the end of the session.

GE.02-14610 (E) 190902 230902

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

ADMINISTRATION OF JUSTICE, RULE OF LAW AND DEMOCRACY (agenda item 3) (continued) (E/CN.4/Sub.2/2002/4-6; E/CN.4/Sub.2/2002/NGO/4, 14-16, 20, 22)

1. Ms. GRAF (International League for the Rights and Liberation of Peoples) said that states of emergency involved a whole series of measures and restrictions which could include the suspension of constitutional rights and freedoms. That was the case in most provinces of south-eastern Turkey, where a state of emergency had been in force for around 20 years and had been extended 46 times. As Turkey hoped to become a full member of the European Union, it planned to lift the state of emergency by the end of 2002 in the two provinces where it still applied. Nevertheless, legitimate doubts could be raised as to whether that would bring about any real change in the situation, since, in two other provinces where a state of emergency had supposedly been lifted in 1997, the administrative office responsible for enforcing the states of emergency had still been in place three years later. Furthermore, according to a recent National Security Council decision, the administration responsible for the state of emergency was to be replaced by a secretariat whose tasks and responsibilities were not yet known. It might simply be the same institution under another name. In the context of the study of human rights and states of emergency, the International League for the Rights and Liberation of Peoples requested Turkey, through the Sub-Commission, to provide details of the secretariat's structure and functions. It also called on the international community to ensure, through the appropriate mechanisms, that the Turkish Government's announcements concerning the reform of human rights standards were effectively implemented.

2. The International League for the Rights and Liberation of Peoples also requested the Sub-Commission to mandate Ms. Zerrougui to carry out a full study on discrimination in the criminal justice system, as a follow-up to her excellent working paper, and to provide her with the necessary resources to do so.

3. Mr. PUNJABI (Himalayan Research and Cultural Foundation) said that the efforts of the United Nations system with regard to the independence of the judiciary - as embodied in the Basic Principles on the Independence of the Judiciary, adopted in 1985 - had been only a relative success. Although the importance of the issue had become increasingly widely recognized in recent years, there were problems in extending judicial guarantees to human rights other than individual freedoms, as had been pointed out in the report of the sessional working group on the administration of justice (E/CN.4/Sub.2/2001/7).

4. The independence of the judiciary was a pillar of democracy, and it was therefore a matter of great concern that Governments in some States were interpreting their respective constitutions as they wished and appointing sympathetic judges to bolster their own power. The international community should put pressure on regimes that manipulated the judicial system under a facade of democracy.

5. Ms. BOWDEN (Liberation), recalling that free elections were fundamental to democracy, said that in south-east Turkey, where most of the population was Kurdish, voters

had been subjected to pressure from the Army and ballot papers had been stolen during the count. Liberation therefore called for observer teams to be sent to Turkey to monitor the November 2002 elections.

6. Liberation also urged the Sub-Commission to consider the problem of the impunity enjoyed by the perpetrators of numerous human rights violations in Jammu and Kashmir. Under a range of laws governing the activities of the Indian armed forces in that region, the military were able to fire on civilians without fear of prosecution.

7. Mr. OMOTOSHO (Observer for Nigeria) said that citizens' rights in the area of criminal justice were guaranteed under Nigerian law and that victims of violations of those rights could seek redress through the legal system. The current Government attached great importance to the independence of the judiciary and had therefore decided to wage war on corruption. It had also improved judicial officials' conditions of service and undertaken an extensive reform of the prison system.

8. According to the working paper on discrimination within the criminal justice system, most judicial systems did not cater for the needs of vulnerable groups in society; he therefore called upon the Sub-Commission to carry out a study of the need to reform criminal justice systems and to provide advisory services to developing countries to help them establish an impartial judiciary.

9. Noting the growing incidence of discriminatory practices against immigrants in developed countries, despite the international community's efforts to combat racism and discrimination, he called upon the Sub-Commission to assist in implementing the Programme of Action of the Durban World Conference against Racism and to cooperate with the special mechanisms on follow-up to the Conference established by the Commission on Human Rights, by making its views and expert studies available to those mechanisms.

10. Ms. BACHTOBJI (Observer for Tunisia) said that Tunisia had opted to build a society based on the rule of law and the promotion of human rights and, to that end, gradual reforms had been undertaken in the administration of justice. The measures adopted included a reduction in the length of police custody, the introduction of community service as an alternative penalty and the creation of the post of enforcement judge. Other steps had been taken as part of the constitutional reform in June 2002, including measures making police custody and pre-trial detention subject to court supervision - arbitrary detention being prohibited by law; facilitating the granting of conditional release in certain cases; and introducing the practice of mediation in criminal cases.

11. It was regrettable that certain non-governmental organizations (NGOs) took advantage of the opportunity they were given to address the Sub-Commission and spread disinformation, belittling anything that could be an indication of progress in a Muslim Arab country. With regard to the situation of Mr. Hammami and his wife Ms. Nasraoui, she said that Mr. Hammami had been found guilty of offences under criminal law - including incitement to rebellion - following a fair trial. He was regularly visited in prison by a doctor and members of his family. Furthermore, he had not yet exhausted all domestic remedies.

12. As to his wife, her decision to stage a hunger strike constituted attempted blackmail, and the intention behind the publicity surrounding it had hardly been of a humanitarian nature. Similarly, the allegations that her daughters had been harassed contained not a shred of truth and were merely a ploy to hijack the justice system.

13. Ms. HOUMMANE (Observer for Morocco) said that her delegation wished to emphasize Morocco's determination to consolidate the progress it had made towards democracy and the rule of law, as shown by its launch of a comprehensive reform policy. In the area of the administration of justice, the office of ombudsman - known as the Diwan Al-Madhalim - had been established in December 2001: the ombudsman's task was to seek reparation for injustices suffered by users of public services, to cooperate with the judiciary and to reinforce the work of the Human Rights Advisory Council. He was quite independent of the executive, legislative and judicial branches and his decisions were completely impartial. He acted as a mediator between citizens and State administrations and encouraged those administrations to uphold the rule of law and equity. In addition, King Mohammed VI had reorganized the Human Rights Advisory Council in April 2001, giving it greater powers and rationalizing its working methods to enable it better to promote human rights.

14. In the area of prison administration, a new law enacted as part of the overall reform of the justice system afforded better protection for detainees by bringing domestic legislation into line with the Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners, adopted by the Economic and Social Council in July 1957. Lastly, she said that draft amendments to the powers of the permanent military court were in preparation, whereby only members of the Army could be tried under its jurisdiction.

15. Mr. SUNGAR (Observer for Turkey) drew the attention of the Sub-Commission to some of the many constitutional and legislative amendments adopted by the Turkish Parliament on 3 August 2002. The death penalty, already subject to a moratorium since 1984, had now been abolished de jure except in times of war or imminent threat of war. The legal restrictions on the learning of languages and dialects traditionally used by citizens in their daily lives had been lifted, as had the restrictions on radio and television broadcasting in those languages and dialects. Review of civil and criminal cases in the light of decisions of the European Court of Human Rights was now possible. Implementing decrees would be adopted by the competent authorities and the relevant provisions of law amended accordingly. The amendments once again demonstrated Turkey's commitment to improving the human rights situation.

Statements made in exercise of the right of reply

16. The CHAIRPERSON invited observer delegations wishing to exercise their right of reply to take the floor.

17. Mr. LOUTFY (Observer for Egypt) said that it was important to remain objective and not use the platform offered by the Sub-Commission to make statements that were unacceptable. NGOs had always been active in Egypt and the State respected their work, making them subject to financial and legal regulation only in order to protect the public interest. The trial of Dr. Ibrahim had not had any bearing on freedom of opinion or expression. He had been accused of fraudulently obtaining funds from the European Union; his trial had been conducted with all

judicial guarantees and he had leave to appeal. No one was above the law in Egypt and the applicable law was domestic law. Egypt would give details of the case to anyone requesting them.

18. Mr. MAMADOU (Observer for Mauritania) said it was regrettable that certain individuals distorted reality and spread allegations that were completely baseless. In fact there was no discrimination based on race or social or ethnic origin in Mauritania. The trials referred to by the representative of the Movement against Racism and for Friendship among Peoples had been conducted in public and following due process of law. The accused had enjoyed their full rights, in particular the right to a defence, in the presence of foreign observers, including representatives of Amnesty International and the International Commission of Jurists. As to the alleged existence of refugees, he said that Mauritania was an open country where all citizens were free to come and go without any administrative hindrance and that no Mauritanian could seriously claim refugee status. Mauritania was a State governed by the rule of law and was characterized by the separation of powers, political pluralism and equality among citizens: those citizens did not experience discrimination of any kind and lived harmoniously in peace, enjoying stability and economic and social progress.

19. Mr. ASWAD (Observer for Iraq) said he was astonished at the way in which certain people used the forum of the Sub-Commission to make statements devoid of all objectivity on issues that were not even on the agenda. The NGO Interfaith International, for example, had made unfounded allegations against Iraq and should instead have taken account of the situation in that country, which had been subject to a 13-year embargo that had claimed thousands of civilian victims and was now threatened with attack by a major Power. It would be preferable to keep to the facts.

20. Mr. PENA GHISLENI (Observer for Brazil), referring to the statement made the previous day by the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions, said that the municipal police were investigating the murder of Bartolomeu Moraes da Silva and had arrested two suspects. The crime appeared to be one committed under ordinary law and there was nothing to suggest that Pará State officials were implicated. The appalling violence done to the victim could not be described as torture within the meaning of article 1 of the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment. The federal Government was following the case very closely and would provide further information to any NGOs requesting it.

21. Mr. REYES RODRÍGUEZ (Observer for Colombia) said it was regrettable that certain NGOs, such as the World Federation of Trade Unions, were in the habit of presenting figures devoid of scientific rigour, distorted facts and inaccurate dates, and of making statements based on articles from the media purely in order to impress their audience. Far from promoting the cause of human rights, such statements compromised the dialogue between States and NGOs and, moreover, contributed nothing new. The Colombian Government was not unaware of the violations committed by illegal armed groups in the conflict in Colombia and did not deny their seriousness.

22. Mr. SORABJEE said that more attention should be paid, under the agenda item on the administration of justice, to the issue of the impunity enjoyed by perpetrators of serious human

rights violations. Impunity was unacceptable, firstly because it ran counter to the basic principle that no one was above the law, secondly because it was discriminatory insofar as the only beneficiaries were those in senior positions, and lastly because it violated victims' right to see perpetrators punished. Furthermore, it elicited deep feelings of resentment among victims or family members, which in turn gave rise to fresh acts of violence. Consideration should be given to establishing a compensation fund for victims, to be maintained by the fines imposed on perpetrators.

23. The CHAIRPERSON declared closed the debate on agenda item 3.

ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL RIGHTS (agenda item 4) (E/CN.4/Sub.2/2002/3, 8, 9-12, 14, 15, 17, 41, 43 and 44; E/CN.4/Sub.2/2002/NGO/6, 9-12, 17, 21 and 26; E/CN.4/Sub.2/2002/WG.2/WP.1 and Adds.1 and 2, and WP.2)

24. Mr. GUISSÉ, introducing the study on the relationship between the enjoyment of economic, social and cultural rights and the promotion of the realization of the right to drinking water supply and sanitation (E/CN.4/Sub.2/2002/10), requested by the Commission on Human Rights in its decision 2002/105 of 22 April 2002, explained that the document was a preliminary report and its aim was merely to set out the key ideas which would be developed subsequently.

25. Water was the source of life and access to drinking water was crucial to the existence of every human being. More than 1.5 billion people around the world currently had no access to safe drinking water. Moreover, the World Health Organization (WHO) estimated that 80 per cent of illnesses were transmitted by contaminated water, a fact that should prompt the international community to give serious consideration to the question of the right to drinking water, a right that must be regarded as non-derogable, since it was linked to the right to life.

26. The shortage of water had two principal causes. First of all, there were natural causes such as desertification, the drying-up of water courses and depletion of the ozone layer, as well as heat evaporation, which affected not only sub-Saharan countries. Advancing desertification was exacerbating the imbalance in the distribution of water throughout the world, as could be illustrated by a comparison between Canada, which had numerous lakes that provided vast quantities of fresh water to its population, and sub-Saharan Africa, where there was a cruel lack of water. Water shortages were also caused by human activities. The agricultural sector was currently the leading consumer of water, and agriculture was the basis of food production, which explained the linkage between the right to water and the right to food. There was thus a shortage of water in every country of the world, and if, as predicted, half of the world's population would be suffering from serious water shortages by 2015, the problem then would be a source of conflict around the world.

27. The right to drinking water was recognized in international law. It was specifically mentioned in two conventions in force, namely the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, ratified by 164 countries, and the Convention on the Rights of the Child, ratified by 190 countries. In the World Declaration on the Survival, Protection and Development of Children, adopted at the World Summit for Children in New York in 1990, the heads of States and Government had made a commitment to promote the provision of clean water for all children. This commitment constituted the legal basis, at the international level, for

the right to drinking water, at least with regard to women and children. The Protocol on Water and Health to the Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Water Courses and International Lakes, signed in London in June 1999, had been the first international instrument of positive law to take a position in favour of access to safe water for all, its objectives being access to drinking water and sanitation for everyone. The same was stated in the Additional Protocol to the American Convention on Human Rights in the Area of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (the Protocol of San Salvador), which had entered into force in November 1999. The right to drinking water was also recognized at the national level, and States had adopted legislation to underpin that right in law.

28. Yet if the right to drinking water and sanitation was to be made a full human right, individuals must be given means of access to drinking water. The price of water, as an economic and social good, was a vital factor in that regard. In the countries of the North, the situation had reached the point where the discussion focused on social pricing. Ireland, where water was distributed free of charge to all, was an exception, since the majority of Western countries had opted for wholesale privatization, solely for the purpose of setting up commercial ventures. In countries of the South, some companies privatized water resources only to resell them at exorbitant prices. That was a violation of the right to drinking water, particularly as the water supplied by such companies was in many cases polluted.

29. States must work together to find a solution to the water problem based on international solidarity, as they were required to do under Articles 55 and 56 of the Charter of the United Nations. All countries, both in the North and in the South, must take action if water, the source of life, was to be accessible to all.

30. Mr. PREWARE welcomed the detailed report submitted by Mr. Guissé. The right to drinking water was taken for granted by many, but the study would open everyone's eyes to the fact that some 1.5 billion people had no access to safe drinking water and nearly 4 billion people lacked adequate sanitation. Those facts underscored the magnitude of the problem facing the world. There was increasing recognition of the need to manage vital water resources more as an obligatory service than as a commercial venture. The study emphasized that obligation by stressing the right of access to water and the right to adequate sanitation. Mr. Guissé could therefore perhaps clarify the distinction between the right to drinking water and the right of access to water.

31. He urged Mr. Guissé to develop his study further, and to focus particularly on the acute problem of water in arid regions and the issue of the cost of water for disadvantaged groups. In addition, in many countries where water was plentiful - in his own country, Nigeria, for example - most of that water was unhealthy in areas where certain transnational corporations operated. In his view, Mr. Guissé's study could help to raise public awareness of all such issues and of the importance of access to drinking water, which was far from guaranteed for all.

32. Ms. Zerrougui Vice-Chairperson, took the Chair.

33. Mr. SORABJEE thanked Mr. Guissé for his thought-provoking working paper. He recalled that Mahatma Gandhi had wanted every Indian to be entitled to safe water and had consequently made recognition of that right one of his main objectives. The right to drinking

water was, in fact, now guaranteed under the Indian Constitution. The Supreme Court of India held that the first human right was the right to life, that right being understood not only as pertaining to the individual's physical existence but also as including, as one of its fundamental components, the right to safe water. In India, that right was enforceable in law, and a commission had been established to ensure that it was respected. He himself had referred to Mr. Guissé's work during the commission's deliberations.

34. Mr. OGURTSOV said that drinking water was in short supply not only in developing countries but also in developed countries. That shortage, moreover, was largely due to human activities. In the lifetime of a single generation, rivers, lakes and even seas had been polluted by industry, as exemplified by Russia's Lake Baikal and the Aral Sea. The disastrous impact of such activities on water resources obviously warranted closer attention. It would be appropriate to highlight the role of transnational corporations in that regard and to make a comparative study of the cost of drinking water in various countries.

35. Ms. BETTEN said that, while international law was certainly important, no legal instruments, however comprehensive, would ever bring a single precious glass of water to countries where water resources were non-existent. She would like the next report to make reference to specific projects and programmes, including within the United Nations system, that had been implemented to increase drinking-water resources.

36. Mr. Soo Gil PARK said the fact that the planet's resources were not infinite had only begun to be realized in the middle of the twentieth century. The use of those resources, and particularly of fishery resources, had then started to be regulated. It had also been recognized that water was not an infinite resource and in 1997 the United Nations General Assembly had adopted the Convention on the Law of the Non-navigational Uses of International Watercourses. The General Assembly had extended the scope of the Convention to cover, among other things, the economic and social needs of the States concerned and, in that connection, had emphasized the importance of preventing and controlling the pollution of watercourses. The right to drinking water was also implicit in the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, notably in articles 11 and 12, concerning the right to adequate food and the right to health.

37. Given the close linkage between the right to drinking water and other human rights, he supported Mr. Guissé's position on the need to entrust water-resource management to public-service utilities and not to private companies whose sole aim was the pursuit of profit.

38. It would be useful if Mr. Guissé could give a more precise account of States' obligations under international law with regard to the provision of drinking water. In paragraph 22 of his report, Mr. Guissé referred to the consequence of the right to drinking water as being "free water". He would like to know what exactly was meant by that term.

39. Mr. DECAUX paid tribute to Mr Guissé's work, but believed that it would be necessary to rank the legal texts cited and define the terms used more precisely. He agreed with Mr. Soo Gil Park, in particular with regard to the concepts of free water and access to drinking water. Free provision was acceptable only if there was no wastage. The term "access" should also be defined. In France, for example, a prefect could prohibit the watering of lawns if drought conditions so required.

40. Mr. EIDE said that, in his opinion, Mr. Guissé's study was of great importance. Two points that he would like to see developed in the future were those of water distribution and the prospects for developing water-saving techniques.

41. Ms. JOURDAN (Association of World Citizens) said that there was a parallel between the serious problem of drinking water and the problem of access to health. She wondered whether there was debate on water usage, followed by referendums, in any countries. She also wondered what regional conventions existed on the matter and what role was played by the bodies responsible for monitoring their implementation. Other problems included the cleaning up of sources of water that presented a danger to health; the movement of population groups as a result of armed conflicts to areas where the water supply was polluted or inadequate; and, as in the case of Palestine, the issue of ownership of the subsoil containing the water resources.

42. Mr. GUISSÉ thanked Mr. Preware for drawing attention to the urgent problem of water resources in arid zones and the issue of the cost of drinking water, and particularly the problem of transnational corporations selling often polluted water at exorbitant prices. Water pricing was indeed a major preoccupation in the countries of the South.

43. He was grateful to Mr. Sorabjee for recalling that Gandhi had made the right to drinking water one of his main concerns. He was honoured to hear that the Indian commission on drinking water had referred to his work and asked to be informed of their decisions.

44. Mr. Ogurtsov had rightly stated that water was beginning to run short not only in the countries of the South but also in the North, where a number of lakes, for example, were already prone to dry up periodically. Such water shortages were indeed related to human activity, as had been recognized for more than 10 years.

45. He entirely agreed with Ms. Betten. There was a yawning gap between the legal instruments and reality on the ground. He intended to raise the issue of the development of water resources in practical terms.

46. Mr. Soo Gil Park had rightly highlighted the link between the right to drinking water and sanitation and other human rights, including the right to peace: in 15 years' time, conflicts were more likely to centre on water than on oil. He had also mentioned States' obligations. That was a matter of context: in the South, States needed to confront private companies and enforce the right to drinking water.

47. Replying to Mr. Decaux, he said that it was difficult to discuss the legal texts in the appropriate order in a preliminary report. With regard to his comments on free provision of water, he would point out that, when a State intervened, it must obviously enforce the right of all to drinking water and not encourage waste.

48. With regard to the role of regional institutions, as mentioned by the Association of World Citizens, he cited the example of the European Court of Human Rights, which had on several occasions punished violations of the right to drinking water. The European Court's case law could, in fact, provide a model for other regional organizations.

49. Mr. Pinheiro resumed the Chair.

50. Mr. BENGOA, introducing the programme of work of the ad hoc working group established to prepare a study to contribute to the drafting of an international declaration on extreme poverty and human rights (E/CN.4/Sub.2/2002/15), said that the ad hoc working group, consisting of Mr. Guissé, Mr. Pinheiro, Mr. Yokota and himself, had decided that the central point was to understand poverty and its consequences as phenomena affecting the right to life and, therefore, a number of rights that took precedence over any secondary strategic or tactical considerations. The members of the working group had agreed that a declaration on poverty should refer to the inalienable rights of human beings and the principle of human dignity, which could not fail to elicit a favourable response from States and other agents.

51. The ad hoc working group had decided to study contemporary forms of poverty, i.e. the most extreme forms of poverty, systems of absolute destitution that were the consequence of the economic, political and social processes that currently dominated the world. While poverty in general prevented the enjoyment of economic, social and cultural rights in many ways, extreme poverty was in itself a gross violation of the right to life and human dignity and thus struck at the heart of the human rights system, which was the foundation of world peace, security and human society.

52. One of the main hypotheses put forward by the group was that new forms of globalization had given rise to a new form of poverty, "modern poverty", which was characterized by, among other things, the marginalization of many populations and regions of the world as a result of the breakdown of systems based on self-sufficiency. The globalization of communications had caused a "revolution of needs" among broad sectors of the world's population that had previously been self-sufficient but now, with the disruption of traditional patterns of production and consumption, were no longer able to meet their minimum needs.

53. The study took a multicultural approach to the analysis of developments and attempted to avoid ethnocentric visions based on particular lifestyles or patterns of consumption. In analysing the causes of poverty, the group had also made efforts to take into account all external and internal factors leading to contemporary forms of poverty, without neglecting aspects relating to "good governance", social and economic policies and international, national, regional and local systems of government.

54. The right to life, defined in terms of the biological sustainability of human beings, consisted of four basic rights, namely the right to adequate food, the right to drinking water, the right to shelter and the right to health. For the purposes of the study, the working group considered that a person, or group of persons, who lacked sufficient food, had no access to drinking water, had no place to live and whose health was at risk, was living in extreme poverty. It also considered those four basic rights to be the necessary and essential minimum that facilitated the exercise of all other rights, economic, social and cultural, as well as civil and political.

55. The proposed study would review States' obligations at the national and international levels, and the obligations of international institutions, both public and private. It would also give an account of the situation of poverty in the world, with particular emphasis on the

enormous inequalities caused by globalization. Its aim would be not to repeat the work on poverty done by many other institutions, but to seek information and cooperate with international governmental institutions, regional institutions, specialized agencies and NGOs in order to undertake a dynamic study of contemporary forms of poverty.

56. The programme of work of the ad hoc working group would cover a three-year period: a preliminary report would be submitted in the first year, a progress report in the second year and a final report, together with a draft declaration (the main headings of which were listed in the programme of work), in the third year. The ad hoc group did not propose to undertake an academic study of such complex issues but to invite the various governmental, intergovernmental and non-governmental actors to come up with a responsible proposal on the basis of broad debate. To that end, it intended to organize various seminars and workshops open to all those actors. Work undertaken by specialists, with no input from organizations representing disadvantaged sectors, Governments or persons engaged in the fight against poverty throughout the world, would serve no purpose.

57. Mr. YOKOTA, speaking as a member of the ad hoc working group, emphasized that the basic premise of the proposed study was that poverty was in itself the source of numerous human rights violations. Apart from the fact that it was itself a violation of economic, social and cultural rights, it led indirectly to other violations, including sexual exploitation for commercial purposes, to give but one example.

58. Many steps had already been taken by Governments to combat poverty at the national level and by international organizations to encourage cooperation and support the actions taken in that regard, but those efforts had frequently failed. Midway through the United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty (1997-2006), more than one billion people were still living in poverty. One of the development objectives of the 2000 Millennium Declaration was to reduce by half the number of people living in poverty by 2015. It was now essential to implement new, concrete plans of action to try to reach that objective.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.